

To: Newsroom Directors and Assignment Editors

For Immediate Release:

December 6, 2007

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Number of pages: 3

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### The Conservation Fund, Mt. Cuba Center and U.S. Forest Service Partner with State in Landmark Forest Conservation Effort

*Joint effort to protect vital forest habitat in Sussex County is the latest phase in a historic three-year alliance*

Dover, DE (December 6, 2007) —The State of Delaware today announced the acquisition of 1,100 acres of forest habitat in Sussex County, Delaware, as part of a three-year, multi-phased project that has protected more than 5,000 acres of forest habitat to date. The property, which was previously owned by Glatfelter Pulpwood Company, was purchased with the support of the Conservation Fund and grants from Mt. Cuba Center and the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program.



*Left to right:*

Larry Mastic, Deputy Area Director for the U.S. Forest Service, Michael Scuse, Secretary of Agriculture, Ruth Ann Minner, Governor of Delaware, Sen. Charlie Copeland, Vice President of the Board for the Mt. Cuba Center, Blaine T. Phillips, Jr., Mid-Atlantic Director of The Conservation Fund

“This purchase helps fulfill one of the major pillars of my Livable Delaware agenda by preserving forestland and open space,” said Governor Ruth Ann Minner. “With this generous donation and statewide cooperation to preserve our precious land resources, Delaware residents can enjoy the beauty and benefits of these forestlands for many years to come.”

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The property, which was purchased for \$12.8 million, consists of some of the last intact forest areas in Delaware and provides critical wildlife habitat as well as water quality protection. The newly protected land is also vital to both the Chesapeake and Delaware Bay watersheds.

“This landmark endeavor by the Conservation Fund, Mt. Cuba Center and U.S. Forest Service represents the largest forest protection effort in the state’s history,” said Blaine T. Phillips, Jr., Mid-Atlantic Director of The Conservation Fund. “Our partners were able to rally for this cause which will preserve several key pieces of land for future generations to enjoy. We look forward to continuing to work with them to further conservation efforts throughout Delaware.”

In support of this initiative, the Mt. Cuba Center, located in Hockessin, Delaware, contributed a grant of more than \$10 million to help acquire the property.

“The Mt. Cuba Center has committed itself to preserving open space, and we wanted to get behind a cause that would make a real impact in Delaware,” said Charlie Copeland, Vice President of the Board for the Mt. Cuba Center. “Clearly this project required a tremendous effort by all parties involved and we are very happy with the outcome. We believe this growing partnership has tremendous potential for the future.”

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) also contributed approximately \$2 million toward the purchase of the property through its Forest Legacy Program. “With less than 1/3 of Delaware’s land area in forests and much of those forests becoming increasingly fragmented, it is vital for the U.S. Forest Service to help Delaware promote forest management on the large blocks of forestland that remain,” said Larry Mastic, Deputy Area Director for the U.S. Forest Service. The Forest Legacy Program supports State efforts to protect environmentally sensitive forest lands. Since 2004, the USFS has provided more than \$8.9 million to help Delaware protect over 2,000 acres of forest habitat.

“Sussex County is now the fastest-growing county on the eastern seaboard,” noted E. Austin Short III, Delaware State Forester. “Every acre is critical for maintaining a balance between economic development and protecting what little open space we have left.”

The property will be managed for timber production, wildlife habitat and recreational activities. Of the 1,100 acres, 753 acres will be managed by the Department of Natural Resources’ Fish and Wildlife Division with the remaining 347 acres becoming part of the Redden State Forest.

### **About The Conservation Fund**

The Conservation Fund is the nation’s foremost environmental nonprofit dedicated to protecting America’s land and water legacy for current and future generations. Seeking innovative conservation solutions for the 21st century, the Fund works to integrate economic and environmental goals. Since its founding in 1985, the Fund has helped its partners safeguard wildlife habitat, working landscapes, community “green space,” and historic sites totaling more than 5 million acres. With 1 percent fundraising costs and 96 percent program allocation, The Conservation Fund is recognized as the

nation's top-rated environmental nonprofit by both the American Institute of Philanthropy and Charity Navigator. [www.conservationfund.org](http://www.conservationfund.org)

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### **About the Mt. Cuba Center**

The Mt. Cuba Center is a 650-acre, non-profit horticultural institution set in the rolling hills of northern Delaware. Our spectacular woodland wildflower gardens are recognized as the regions finest and are the inspiration for all of Mt. Cuba Center's horticultural, education, research and conservation initiatives. The Mt. Cuba Center is dedicated to the study, conservation, and appreciation of plants native to the Appalachian Piedmont region through garden display, education, and research.

### **About the Forest Legacy Program**

The U.S. Forest Service, through the Forest Legacy Program (FLP), recognizes that intact forest lands supply timber products, wildlife habitat, soil and watershed protection, aesthetics, and recreational opportunities. FLP is a Federal program which supports State efforts to protect environmentally-sensitive forest lands through conservation easements and property acquisition. FLP is an entirely voluntary program that administers grants in partnership with states, local governments and land trusts, communities and private organizations to carry out conservation efforts.

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